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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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THE ATONING GOD.

"Seeing then that we have a great high-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high-priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—Heb. iv. 14-16.

Whatever else may be said, there can be no question that to those to whom this word came, the reigning God was presented in aspects the most tender and the most encouraging, by reason of his intimate relationships with human experience and human history. It is the method of the Bible to present the divine nature to men through symbols. God is never seen as he is; and those symbols are such as will impart the most accurate or the nearest impressions of truth to those to whom they are immediately given. In speaking to the Jew, there could be no symbol or representative character that would convey more knowledge on the side of divine sympathy and mercifulness than that of their high-priest; and so to them Jesus is called a high-priest. And it is declared that we are to come to him in every time of need, because he is joined to us by an actual personal knowledge obtained from his own experience.

Now, I wish to come to this thought of our text, as found in the epistle to the Hebrews, through a different representation, made by a different writer. We know not who was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews; but it is, I think, transparently certain that it was not Paul. In writing

to the Corinthian Church, Paul uses this language, in the 2d chapter of the 1st epistle :

“I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

That is, not even him, in any other relation than that of the crucified Jesus.

“I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

We shall get back again from this passage to the other one in due time. The apostle here was not unfolding the history of his procedure among the Corinthians. He was not unfolding the topics which he had discussed, or which he meant to discuss among them. We have the record showing that he did talk about many other subjects besides that of Jesus Christ; and those who cite this passage as showing that the pulpit must not preach upon any other topic but that are mistaken. But Paul says that ingenuity and the blandishments of rhetoric were not employed to give to this truth excellency of speech. In regard to whatever in speech is attractive, persuasive, witching, artful, beauteous, the apostle declares that he did not resort to it. He says, “I did not attempt to win you by aesthetic persuasion; nor did I attempt to enter upon the domain of your beliefs, by the power of an all-compelling logic or philosophy.”

There were schools multitudinous, and men were drifted off into sects in those days by cosmogonies, by philosophies, which undertook to develop the theory of human life in respect to the present and the time to come; and the apostle said, “I did not imitate them, and undertake to give you a theory of the world and all the universe. I did not by wisdom attempt, as it were, to ensnare you, and lead you captive by logical bonds; but I determined that if I had success with you it should be through such an opening of the divine nature that the power manifested should be not so much from me as from your conception of that divine nature which

I should be able to disclose to you. I determined that your faith should not stand in man, so that anybody could say, 'Yes, it is Paul ; and as quick as he is gone away, and they do not hear his voice any more, they will fall back : they are mere Paulites.' I determined that men should not say, 'He caught them because he was an ingenious reasoner ; he ensnared them with his arguments and subtle sophistries.' I proposed to open before you such a conception of the divine nature as should make that divine nature act through your faith and belief so as to be forever after operative in you. I proposed to give you access to God ; to give you confidence in him ; to give you boldness, in other words, to come at every time of need to the throne of grace. This is what I meant to do : not to preach myself ; not to preach human ingenuities ; but to develop such a divine character as should make every man want to believe, and especially every man that was in trouble."

What, then, was that special view which he meant to develop ?

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him *crucified*."

There was every reason in the world why a cautious, diplomatic teacher, seeking to revolutionize an old system, and to introduce a new one, should avoid that particular point in the history of Jesus Christ when writing to a Jewish audience, as in part he was ; for never was there an idea so contradictory to the notion of the people of that time as that the Messiah was one who should be taken captive by a handful of men, and scourged and stripped of all power, and laid away helpless as a slave, and made to suffer an ignominious death. It was the absolute obliteration of everything that they had thought respecting the delivering Messiah. And it would seem a monstrous blunder in the apostle to bring this forward in a Jewish audience. Still less, if possible, would it seem apposite to a Greek or cultivated audience, because it sets forth Jesus Christ as the divine emblem and significant representation of God, and yet shows him as broken, as scourged, and as crucified. And to this hour, human nature, uninstructed, revolts at the consideration of a divine nature that is bent

before the power of men, and is made subservient to all their passions, and is overthrown. The standing argument to-day against the divinity of Christ is, “ Do you suppose God could die ? Do you suppose God could suffer such indignities—the infinite, the all-powerful, the transcendently pure and unchangeable ? Do you suppose that a being whose nature it is to be everlastinglly happy could be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ? ” All those crystalline notions of divinity which the Greek mind had excogitated were put to shame by the conception of a God who could suffer, or could submit himself to the coercing hands of men that he might be made to suffer. There was every reason, therefore, both in respect to the Jews and in respect to the Greeks, why a different line should be followed.

In the thought of Paul, Christ made manifest a view of God which had never before been so clearly brought out, which had been seen, if at all, only in twilight, and in which was set forth the supreme power of the family government of God in the world. Paul declared, in preaching Christ and him crucified, that God was one who was capable, through sympathy, of suffering for his creatures. He brought near—I might almost say he brought into—the household the long-exiled Father, and united the human race in Jesus Christ to its lineal and lawful Head, and so revolutionized, from the very foundation, the theological conceptions of God, of the divine government, of the human race, of its relations to God, and of its destiny. You cannot maintain the two systems—the old Greek monarchical conception of an absolute God, crystalline, pure, lifted up above all needs and infirmities, and demanding exact obedience, or punishing disobedience ; and the Christian conception of a Father whose is the whole human race, with its great burdens of sin and ignorance and mistakes and aspirations and yearnings and longings, which have no meaning in the heart of a Deity such as the Greeks believed in. You cannot reconcile these opposing theories. Paul, having felt the more true and divine conception of God as an infinitely sensitive Being who had always felt for every single living creature in the race, coupling himself to mankind so that they should be trained

up along their stumbling way by the invis'b'e and unconscious drawings of his great paternal heart—Paul, having once gained this idea, could not extinguish it. Once receiving this light, it was to him transcendent over every other ; and he said, “ I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ as the epitome and incarnation of God, and I determined not to know him simply in his syllabic teaching among men, sweet, serene, and beautiful : I determined to know him as set forth by the supreme and emblematic act of dying for those whom he loved, and those that hated him. In this aspect, disclosing the nature of God, I determined to know Jesus. And I determined to preach that view among you, so that they should not say that it was the man ; that it was the voice of cunning, or the glitter of magnificence ; so that they should say that it was something that had risen out from the bosom of divinity ; so that your faith should stand in that grand view of God which represented him as a suffering parent.”

Such is the aspect of the divine nature which the apostle determined to present ; and it was the disclosure of a great partnership of God with the human race, like that of a father with his family. It implies no such suffering of Christ as comes to man in his animal nature. It implies no such suffering as comes from ignorance or from corruption. We should ascribe to God that which would shock your sensibilities if we represented him as undergoing any such suffering as that which comes from the lower nature of man. There is a vulgar suffering, and there is royal suffering. That suffering which comes from the baffled and disappointed and unlawful endeavors of men to compass wrong ends by wrong measures ; that suffering which falls out by reason of our stumbling against law, unseen or unknown, is a low form of suffering ; but there is a much higher form. We have analogies and exemplifications of it in human life itself. It is the indispensable condition of nobility. There was never a hero in this world, there was never anybody that the human race conceived of as royal, who had not suffered for others ; who had not given himself in some sense for his fellow-men. The heroes, for the most part, that have been known, the men

who have been erected into demigods or deities, were, all of them, in spite of their faults, beings who had had the heart and the greatness to suffer for their country and for their kind. We cannot imagine a true nobility that is self-contained ; that is able to ward off all suffering ; that never does suffer ; that never will suffer ; that can live in the midst of human life and all its unfoldings and environments and contrive to maintain itself inviolate from suffering. It is inconsistent with our fundamental notions of true manhood, that a being should go through this life in the conditions in which men live, and be able to shield himself entirely from suffering, and wrap himself in a serenity of perpetual joy. We may say, "That is a beautiful conception ;" but there is nothing in it that wins the admiration and reverence of men.

Coming down from the higher levels of heroism, we cannot conceive of a friendship which does not carry in it the willingness to suffer one for another. Friendship is a partnership in sorrow and sympathy. There is no friendship which has not in it the willingness, not only to prevent, but to take, rather than inflict, suffering. You cannot conceive anything that is beautiful in the parental relation except through the medium of suffering. For although without suffering the father and mother may be faithful, after all, it is their labor, it is their care-taking, it is their saving their children by, in some sense, the bearing of things which would come upon those children, it is using their strength to lift up weakness, it is their using experience to ward off the mischiefs of inexperience, it is making their hearts large enough, divine enough, to suffer for their children—it is these things that make the mother what she is in the reverence of every affectionate child, and that make the father venerable as he is in the memory of every true son.

Now, when men say, "It is a desecration of the divine idea to say that God is competent to suffer," it is true if that which is meant is suffering from the animal nature. No such feeling is to be attributed to the divine nature. But if I say to myself, "God is a being who never suffers through pity, or sympathy, or benevolence, or love," I take away from the divine character those elements which

would lift up human nature and make it admirable in our sight ; I take out of the divine nature those very qualities which draw men together ; I destroy in the divine nature those very attributes for which the human heart, everywhere and always, longs and yearns.

Transferring to God material elements ; physicalizing the heavens ; representing the divine Being as sitting upon a throne of crystal, and as having a pavement of glass under his feet ; surrounding him with every quality of external magnificence which an Oriental imagination can conceive—this makes God a poem ; but it is a poem to which no wounded heart, no transfixed soul, would ever draw near. When men are in trouble they do not go to the house of revelry. When men are needy they do not seek out those who enjoy mere external prosperity in the highest degrees. Men who are broken in heart seek those whose hearts have been broken. Men who are in trouble seek those who have been in trouble. Men go to those who are reputed and believed to be in sympathy with their wants. And if there is to be a divine nature disclosed, away with the barbaric idea of universal power ! That does not make a God such as the wants of men require. You may make a being the wisest and the most universal in the out-reaching of his governing forces ; but that does not make the God which the universe needs, and without which it collapses into despair. It is not till you go from the hand to the heart that men begin to find the medicine for inexperience and ignorance. What the world wants is a God that can feel for those who are out of the way, and have compassion upon them because he knows what they are. He remembers their frame, that they are dust. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them. Such a Lord, so pitying, is an object of universal desire and universal attraction.

Hence the aesthetic conception of divinity, the philosophy, whether ancient or modern, that lifts God above suffering and sorrow, even if it teach that he sent his Son into the world to die for it, does not reveal a being that draws men powerfully.

Ah ! if when Jesus came into the world, God stayed at home to enjoy himself, he is very little to me. Would there

be any benefit in such a God ? Oh, yes ; some. If I were sick, poor, suffering from need, and there should be some near relative of mine—my father's brother, my mother's sister, or some one else—who should receive intelligence of my distress, and should send me a pound of tea by an errand boy, that would be something. If such an one should say to his child, “Go down, and convey for me my sympathy and some succor to yonder suffering one,” that also would be something. But there is nothing like going one's self. No person can take the place of a friend. There is in trouble and in sorrow no salve and no balm like that of personal affection and personal sympathy.

Now, if Jesus Christ came into the world to tell me that God for a time intermitted the great seal of absolute government, and permitted him to be sorry for the world, and to die for it, that is something ; but it is not that glorious something which I think he brought to light—namely, the fact that he was divine himself, and that, coming into life to suffer, he came to make known to men that the willingness to suffer for them was the divine nature,—his and his Father's. It does not seem to me that he invented and got up some plan with which he came into this world, and by which he meant to save as many as he could. He came to make known to the human race, in tones that will vibrate to the last centuries of time, the central truth that God is supreme and sovereign, not because he is perfect, and not because he is lifted above care and trouble, but because he has in him a heart and soul that feels for sin, for infirmities, for sorrows, for mistakes; for all that goes to wreck and ruin. Such was the divine nature, brought to us in a language which we can understand, through the incarnation of the divine Spirit in Jesus Christ, and revealing to us, not something gotten up as an episode, not something interjected upon the course of time, but that God was the eternal Father of ages, and that he was a Being whose sympathies were vital, universal, exquisite, and full of stimulating, rescuing power. And for the ages and ages yet to come, the eternal sovereign is to be named Father ; and he earns and deserves the title, by having transcendently and infinitely more compassion and

sympathy and suffering power for those who are in peril than any earthly parent has.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him.”

It is the infinitude of Fatherhood in God, and the connection that there is between father and children, which always implies sympathy, and willingness to suffer and give one's self rather than that trouble and mischief should come upon those that are as dear as children. The whole great race of mankind on the earth, and all their dark passages, and all their thundering cries, have been going on under the eye and beneath the heart of a Father, who has a wise purpose which he will fulfil in his time, and reveal in the days that are yet to come.

So the service of Christ, as our tender high-priest, was to bring home to mankind the actual sympathy of God with all the sorrows, struggles, aspirations, mistakes, sins and punishments of mankind. This, I think, ought to set aside the very insufficient and unskillful notion that prevailed (and it is not strange that it should have prevailed), in days past—namely, that in bearing the sins of the world, men have supposed that there was a literal bearing of every sin which every single man committed ; or that there was a literal bearing of the scoffs of men. It was thought that Christ had heaped upon him the sum total of every sensibility that ever had throbbed as a penalty for sin, or ever should throb, thus turning the gulf-stream of all human suffering to set in on him, and making him, in one hour, or in a single period of time, bear every one of men's actual sufferings in his heart.

Now, how unnecessary is this ! How it turns a figure into a scientific dogmatic statement ! God suffered for the whole world, and suffered for every creature ; and if by his mighty power, by his moral influence, by his transforming potency, he is leading men out of sin, he is doing in the heavenly sphere what parents do on earth. The mother suffers, in some respects, more than the child does ; it is proper to say that a mother has borne her child's sufferings and cares

for twenty years ; but does anybody believe that every thought or feeling of pain which that child has experienced has been experienced by the mother ? Is it meant that there has been an absolute transfer of the moral quality of the penalty for every transgression, of every item of suffering, from one to another ? This transgresses the law of the human mind. It is mechanical, it is physical, it is false. Instead of that, we have revealed the more glorious sense of God in his sympathy, united to the whole human family by his love, by his patience, by his kindness, by his self-denial, by his activities, serving not himself, but the household of ages. And what need there is of such a God ! What other view of God can you have when you look at the actual condition of men through time ?

If there is going on a sublimer process than it has entered into the heart of man to conceive ; if the method of creation is greater than any conception that we have ; and if God sits sovereign as the Father, the Lover, and the long-patient Waiter of the universe, by his own thought and by his own long-suffering kindness carrying men onward and upward, then how sublime a being is God ! how transcendent is his function ! how is he lifted up above the small and niggling notions of moral government derived from the impressions of human government !

Without this view, it seems to me the conditions of the human race are not reconcilable with any conception of God which men can worship. I certainly admit that it is impossible for me to worship a God such as has hitherto been taught. I think the world has been cheated. I think the priest has been transferred from the old cruel service of pagan Rome to the mediaval ecclesiastical service, and that a cloud has been thrown between God as a Father and mankind. I think that whatever is tender and merciful has been usurped by the external and the visible. Pity and mercy have been in the church and in the world in the hands of a priesthood who have used it partly for good, but more for the maintenance of their outward authority and reign. And God has been robbed of his attributes. Some parts have been taken from him and given to the Virgin Mary ; but God himself is

as full of compassion and tenderness as the wildest poems have made the Virgin's heart to be. Other parts have been given to the pontiff: but God has in him every gracious quality that belongs to the true pontiff. He has in himself all that the human soul needs. Man, brought into life as he has been, struggling with ignorance, oppressed by passions, thrown into a society that has little regulation, tempted, biased, warped far more than he has power to resist, finds in God everything that is needful to him. In God there is a nature that is not delegated to any virgin nor to any priesthood, which he will retain forever, and which embraces all those elements of patience and loving-kindness which are necessary for the development of the world and the salvation of the race.

Therefore, the substitution of parental sovereignty for barbaric and despotic sovereignty, carries with it a balm of hope, and a regenerating, recuperating and cleansing power, which cannot be derived from anything else.

I say, I am determined to know nothing else but the sovereign majesty and the suffering power of love. In other words, I am determined to know nothing but the capacity of this love to suffer for men. We need sympathy. We die without it. Jesus Christ is to me the emblem of God. He came to teach me by his suffering, not that God is a mere conservator of law, but that the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost, one God, are filled with patience and mercy and loving kindness and forbearance and atonement.

Do you ask me if I believe in the atonement of Christ? I believe in the atonement of God. I believe that there is no other atonement but that everlasting nature of God which spares the weak, which pardons the guilty, which draws men out of themselves, which is long-suffering, but which says, "There shall forever be a difference between truth and lies, between right and wrong;" which says, "Forever and forever selfishness shall be painful, and benevolence shall be blessed; and I will maintain that which is high and noble, and will bring the race up to it by stripes, by chastisements, by tears, by suffering, by long trial: and I will bear and forbear with them, never forgetting that I am striving for the glorious en-

franchisement of the animal into manhood, and for the elevation of manhood into the sonship of God ; and I will see that men shall not be contented and untroubled in wrong ways. I will smite and punish ; but the smiting and the punishing will be for the sake of making my love manifest. Whom I love I chasten, and I scourge every son that I receive."

Such is the divine moral government. Such is the sovereignty of God's paternity and Fatherhood.

This view does not destroy the right and wrong of sin and holiness. As I have shown, they stand as facts under organic systems of the laws of the world. There is no need of teaching men that there is wrong, and that it carries penalty. The whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain until now. The necessity of law and obedience has been evident for incalculable generations. Men need no testimony that sin is sinful, that it is dangerous, and that they must in some way live above it. What was needed was the revelation of the divine paternal sympathy, of the love of God, brooding upon men, and helping them out of that which is evil and into that which is good.

Modern theology goes on preaching and turning end for end the doctrine of sin and repentance. It teaches that when men have repented God will be lenient ; but that is not where we need to have the emphasis put. When we are born, we are born in sin. "In sin my mother conceived me," is the experience of every human creature. We are born blind. We are born without holiness. We are born without arithmetic, without oratory, without poetry, without skill. We are born without anything. I was born with nothing. I did not have the making of myself. I was not consulted as to what I would like to be. I have been unfolding under laws the nature of which and the range of which I did not understand. I have been driven hither and thither, and have suffered much, and shall suffer unto the end. And that which I want, is the medication of hope, and the confidence that all this wilderness which men go through is the training ground on which they are to develop and rise higher and higher. What I want to know is, that though invisible, the great Heart which in the center sits to control all things

is a Father, and not a despot. If it be Father, then I rejoice in afflictions and in infirmities. I am made strong out of weakness, and confident out of despair, and glad out of tribulations. If God be a sovereign who has shown what his nature is in that he bowed his head in Jesus Christ, and who suffered rather than that I should suffer, I will find my way to him, even though it be through myriads of ages.

Even the poor mute root in the cellar, that lies all winter long—the turnip, or the potato—dead, yet knows when April and May come, and knows that there is a sun outside, and begins to sprout, and finds its way, growing in the dark with long, long vines; and if there be a slit or a crack, it will work toward the light; and shall not I, that am no root nor vegetable, no matter through what winters, find my way toward the great Center of warmth and light? If there is summer in heaven I will find it. Though I be plunged into the depths of hell, I long for such a God as is manifest by Jesus Christ; and I will find him. I shall see him for myself, and not another for me. I shall be like him yet, though it may be myriads of ages hence.

It is this hope and this certainty that give power in spite of darkness, and doubt, and skepticism—the hope that we are soaring toward the great Center of the universe, that is love, and shall not fail to find it.

This view of the character of God—not of Christ on earth, but of the eternal Father whom he represented to us—lies at the root of that sympathy, that humanity, which the Gospel sets forth. We are taught that he who would be first must be servant of all; that he must be willing to subordinate his nature for the good of others. A man who will lay down his life for his brother is noble; but the man is still nobler who will keep his life and all the time, purposely, patiently, and with long-suffering, use it for his brother—for the unappreciative, for the unrequiting, for the uncleanly. The man who has such a sense of benevolence that he can perpetually lift up by his sympathy and kindness those who do not thank him and repay him, and who are not apparently benefited by his service to them—that is the man who has in him the spirit that was in Jesus Christ, who died

not for those that had loved him and longed for his coming, and who came not to open prison-doors to those that reached out imploring hands, saying “Rescue ! rescue !”

God showed his love in that he died for us while yet we were his enemies. He showed his love for us in that he suffered for our sake at every step of unfolding in this life while we were at such a distance from true, disinterested requital and gratitude—from everything like the divine disposition. God is obliged to bear us as sick babes are borne in the arms of nurses, through all the years of our lives. And when at last we come to the heavenly gate, we are none of us to enter into the land of the blest because we shall say, “Behold, I am accordant, symmetric, perfected !” None of us are to go into the heavenly land by reason of the many good deeds that we have performed. Every one of us, entering in, will say, “I am come borne by the motherhood and fatherhood of God, who has taken pity on me in my distress ; and I am what I am by the wondrous love and care of God. Open, ye gates, that I may see Him who loved me, and died for me. Open, ye long ranks between me and my God, that I may behold that love and salvation which has by its virtue and power never let men alone, but has drawn them upward and outward, as the sun draws flowers from the soil. I shall not enter heaven by reason of what I have achieved. I shall open no gates as the conqueror of a besieged city, to take possession of that which is mine. I shall not, either, go to heaven as a pauper or beggar, but with my head lifted up, and with my heart full of gladness, and with my soul vibrating with joy. I shall go as one redeemed by the love of Christ, by the love of God the Father, and by the ministration of the Holy Spirit : I shall go as an infinite beneficiary. I shall go to the Source of all bounty and sweetiness and happiness, and lay down my crown, saying, “Not unto me, not unto me, but unto thy name, be all the glory and the power, forever and forever.”

This is my Gospel—the tidings of a God who is, out of his own patience and suffering, working the salvation of the universe. *Yea, and amen !*

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

WE lift up our thoughts to thee, our Father, not as they do who stand in thy presence; for we see through a glass darkly, and they face to face. To them are no more such mysteries as bewilder us. They behold, backward looking, that which they have been, and that from which they have been delivered. The higher understand the lower things; while the lower cannot reach to those that are higher. We look for the retreating forms of those who are gone from us, and wonder if they remember us. We wonder if they are the same, or if, by the translation of death, they are so changed that we are out of sympathy with them, and they with us. We wonder at their occupations. We marvel in regard to a thousand things. Out-reaching thoughts concerning them are shot forth by affection. We yearn for them. But there comes to us no answer from them—no touch, no help; but often darkness and heart-ache, and trouble, thick and deep. Thou art the Light of the world: why are thy children in darkness? Thou art the soul's Bread: why do we hunger? Thou art the Captain of our salvation: why are we struggling in the wilderness, unled? Thou art the Saviour, the Redeemer: why are we thralled? Thou didst come to open the prison door, and to break the chain, and to set the captive free; and yet, behold the moaning of captives, and hear the sounds of chains everywhere.

O Lord our God, we look away from the reality of experience to what we believe—to that which is revealed to us by faith; and we cheer ourselves, we hardly know how, to bear our lot, aspiring vaguely, yearning strongly, and yet without definite apprehension. But all this thou knowest; for thou hast been tempted in all points like as we are, without sin, though we are tempted with much sin; and we believe this, that whatever may be reserved in the future, thou art our Elder Brother, our Forerunner, our Mediator, our Intercessor, our loving Friend, our sustaining Power; and nothing shall overthrow the hope and the trust which we put in thee. Neither height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor the fear of conscience, nor remorse, nor sorrow, shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All the way we are ignorant of; but of this we have abiding trust, and in it we have the utmost faith that when we shall see thee as thou art, everything that is good in us will spring toward thee; that all that is strong in us will seem to have been borrowed of thee. We shall know why we are called sons of God. We shall feel thy presence breathing life and balm into all our nature. We shall be held back from trouble. We shall be lifted up above every infirmity. We shall stand in immutable manhood. We shall be under the influence of a higher manhood than we have ever yet known upon earth. We shall rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory—and that forever and forever.

In this hope we desire to purify ourselves, to walk patiently, and to discharge, as best we may, and according to the measure of our knowledge and our strength, all the duties that are incumbent upon us, having this rest of soul, that whatever we lack Jesus hath it; that wherever we are weak thou art strong; and that thou wilt lift

us up with infinite helpfulness, and wilt bear us from strength to strength, every one of us, until we shall stand in Zion and before God.

For the greatness of this faith we render thee humble thanks this morning; and we pray that Jesus Christ may be made unto us to-day more of wisdom and more of righteousness. May he be made to us all that we need. And as in him we live and move and have our being, so may we feel that his strength is ours, that his goodness is ours, and that we shall walk unconquered and unconquerable through Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

We pray that thy blessing may rest this morning, in a special sense, upon all these who are gathered together, according to their need. May all those who mourn because thou hast stricken them sore, have borne in upon them a sense of God's great mercy in the midst of afflictions; and may they realize, as never before, that which thou art saying to every tried and troubled soul: For the present it is not joyous but grievous; but afterwards, my children, it shall work peaceable fruit of righteousness. And we pray that everywhere this suffering may lead hearts to God in a sweet confiding faith. While they cannot see, may they be able to say, Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.

We pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to all those who are drawn toward thee in importunate petition. Remember, we beseech of thee, those with whom is sickness, and who long for the recovery of their beloved, and appeal to thee in prayer without ceasing. We pray that thou wilt be with all those who are, with sore and troubled hearts, praying to-day for those who are not sick of body but sick of soul. Draw near to all those who are vehemently tried by their various tanglements and relationships in life. Hear them; and may they have boldness to draw near to thee. Thou that hast been able by reason of thine own troubles to succor those who are in trouble; thou that hast pity upon those who are out of the way, we pray that thou wilt draw near to all those who are in the consciousness of their dereliction or weakness and fallibility, scarcely daring to cry unto thee, or who have courage to address thee with only a feeble faith, saying, I believe: help thou mine unbelief.

And we pray that thou wilt draw near to all those on whose souls rest clouds; who wander about unknowing, and yet longing to know; who drift as upon a sea in the darkness of an unstarred night. O Lord our God, thou that art the Comforter of ages, forth from the infinite recesses of the mercy and pity of God, canst thou not, upon all that need, pour abundantly that sustaining and refreshing Spirit by which they shall be enabled to renew their strength and confidence in thee, so that in the midst of night, they may stand as they who stand in the morning.

May thy blessing rest upon all the families that are gathered together in this place; upon all those who are with us, and upon all those who are absent from us; upon all whom we love. Remember any who are upon the sea, and any who are in foreign lands, and any who are scattered by thy providence in distant parts of our own land. Will the Lord be with them to-day, and breathe upon them the breath

of the sanctuary. And we pray that far as they may be from us, they may never be far from Jesus.

We pray that thy blessing may rest upon this whole land. We pray that all those who labor for its upbuilding, in whatever humble spheres, and with whatever self-denial, may have the presence and enlightenment of the Comforter. We pray for schools and academies, for colleges and seminaries of learning, of every kind. We pray for all those who seek to straighten the ways of justice. We pray for all those who seek to ameliorate the condition of men, and bring in all the sweet amenities of humanity. We pray that thou wilt look with compassion upon all those who are suffering from the inflictions of plague, and are in great distress. May they have not only our sympathy but our succor. Wherever there is suffering in this land, may the hearts of this people be bound together so that where one suffers, all may suffer, and that we may learn to feel that all are ours, and that we belong to all.

We pray not for our own land alone, but for all lands throughout the world. Thou hast taught us that the field is the world. Grant that we may take into our sympathy the welfare of every nation, as if it were our own. May we long for peace, for education, for knowledge, for things that pertain to the rights of men, and their duties toward God and toward each other. We pray that the day of superstition and of darkness may be driven away by the brightness of thy coming, and that all those providences which dimly have illumined the future, and have encouraged the hearts of many generations, may begin to blaze in fulfillment. And may all the earth begin to show forth the coming of the Son of God, and the glory of redemption. Grant, we pray, that from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, right speedily the name of Jesus may be known and honored and loved.

And to thy name shall be praises immortal. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

GRANT, our Father, thy blessing upon the truth. Take away from It that imperfection and that unskill which must needs be the result of human handling of divine themes. Give to every heart in thy presence the sense of need, and out of that the sense of supply. Give every one a willingness to see how poor, how sinful and how unworthy he is; and yet, give to every one who needs a sense of the wonder and power and universality and presence of the redeeming love of God as it is made manifest by Jesus Christ. And O! that we might, every one of us, be lifted into some such sympathy with thee that we might be to each other something of what thou art to us. Forbid, since we have been saved a thousand times in our life from utter wreck and destruction by thy gentleness, that we should go out and lay hold of our brother by the throat, and say, Pay me

what thou owest, and cast him into misery and ruin. Give us hearts of compassion. May we manifest that spirit which thou hast shed on us. May love reign everywhere. Let thy kingdom be established in the hearts of thy children. Cause sympathy, man with man, to spread around the world, till the whole earth shall be filled with thy salvation. And to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, shall be the praise forever more. *Amen.*

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